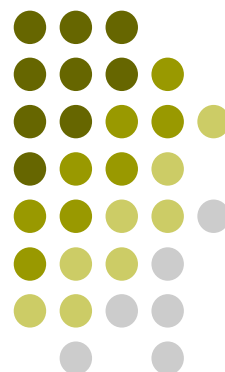


Annual Review of 2020, published for Annual  
Parochial Church Meetings April/May 2021

**The Greenway Benefice - Holy Trinity, Badgeworth,  
St Paul's, Shurdington, and St Mary's, Witcombe  
with Bentham**



Find us on [achurchnearyou.com](https://www.achurchnearyou.com) and on [Facebook @greenwaychurches](https://www.facebook.com/greenwaychurches)

***The Greenway Benefice Team***  
*(supporting Holy Trinity Badgeworth, St Paul's Shurdington,  
and St Mary's Witcombe with Bentham):*

**VICAR**

**The Revd Susan Cooke**

The Vicarage, School Lane, Shurdington GL51 4TF  
Tel: 01242 321806 Email revsusancooke@gmail.com  
Usual day off: Saturday

**Curate (from June 2020):**

The Revd Rebecca Spear nedspear@icloud.com

**Reader and Funeral Minister:**

Mr Robert Poole Tel: 01452 855660 reader.rob.bswb@gmail.com

**Local Ministry Team: *The Greenway Team***

|                   |                    |                      |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Revd Susan Cooke  | Revd Rebecca Spear | Mr Robert Poole      |
| Mrs Sue Padfield  | Mr Paul Stanfield  | Mrs Christine Jeffs  |
| Mrs Clare Stewart | Mrs Rachel Cottell | Mrs Catherine Milsom |

**Retired Clergy:**

The Revd Ian Gobey Tel: 01242 863977

**Benefice Administrator**

Mrs Chris Langham greenway.bswb.office@gmail.com  
Mainly working from home during the pandemic. In the office by appointment.

**Benefice Safeguarding Officer and Care Home Liaison:**

Mrs Rachel Cottell admin.bswb@googlemail.com  
home: 01452 715034

**Three in One Magazine:**

Editor— Mr John Cummins editor3in1@gmail.com  
Business Manager Mr Ian Davies iandavies@pobox.com

# Contents

Please note that this document only contains the Annual Review of organisations and events in the Greenway Benefice .

For a full picture of church life and worship, including finance, it should be read in conjunction with the Churchwardens', Trustee's and Treasurer's reports for each parish. These will be available as separate documents shortly before their respective APCMs , due to be held in April and May 2021.

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## **Our Benefice Vision:**

**"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation"**

[Mark 16<sup>15</sup>]

**Linking with LIFE, the Diocese's Vision, we seek to build the Kingdom in a united benefice where:**

- we are confident disciples in a challenging world,
- the traditional has been maintained but we have been open to the need for change,
- we have nurtured the elderly, particularly via the care homes, and brought the message to young people and their families through our partnership with the school,
- the gifts of all are valued, enabled and developed,
- good leadership has been developed in both ordained and lay,
- we have found the resources – human and financial - to keep our three churches open, outward-looking and central to their villages.

## VICAR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE GREENWAY BENEFICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020

2020 will, of course, be remembered as the year of the COVID19 pandemic. You will see in the report that follows that a whole host of things were different, but also that we still managed to worship together, to minister to each other and to reach out to the communities in Christian love.

All three churches played their part in God's mission through the various lockdowns, suspensions of in person worship and the struggles of many through illness, food poverty and loneliness, co-ordinating and enabling local offers of help within each parish.

Before lockdown, during January, February and much of March, we worshipped as usual, and held another Christening Celebration party and another successful Benefice Away Day at Prinknash Abbey, both in February.

We missed being in church together, which stopped in March 2020 and then resumed in a new pattern in between lockdowns. We were unable to celebrate Easter in church in 2020, but managed to have Lent lunches, and we celebrated some of our festivals, including Christmas Day, albeit under the restrictions set by the government and the Church of England. We also tried some different outdoor services.

We continued to worship with friends from Shurdington Church of England Primary School, Shurdington Chapel and other local Christians in online worship, thanks to our Christian friends headteacher Jon Millin and chapel pastor Steve Jones.

St Mary's and St Paul's achieved the A Rocha Bronze Eco Church award, with Holy Trinity well on the way to joining them. We also held our much quieter second annual Eco Week in 2020.

We had some online worship highlights, including a well-received video for Remembrance, and an extremely popular zoom (where would we be without it!) and Facebook Christingle service. We started worshipping online from March 2020, every Sunday, initially on our Facebook page, and eventually using the zoom platform and our new YouTube page. From Monday to Friday, at noon, we started to share prayer during the day on Facebook. We also offered worship videos to school and shared them on YouTube along with special videos for families.

After Matt stepped down as organist at St Paul's and Holy Trinity at the end of 2019, he remained as choir director, but since the pandemic made singing together very tricky, the benefice choir closed. We are planning a new community choir, under Matt's direction.

It continues to be a pleasure to work with the preschool, Meadows Day Nursery, the café, and the Scouts. Book Club continued throughout 2020, online.

We are blessed with Christian colleagues, lay and ordained, who exercise their ministry generously in many ways, some unseen and some more obvious. My thanks to everyone who does their bit, especially our church wardens and local ministry team. Many of us learned new skills and stepped outside of our comfort zone to continue to lead worship!

Chris Langham continues to be a valued administrator and Robert Poole has been kept busier than usual in his role as Funeral Minister. I and many families are grateful to Rob for his ministry in this particularly difficult year.

There are many others who lead worship on Sundays and during the week, including our bible study group, morning prayer and prayer during the day, all of which continued or started online. My thanks to everyone, and to Revd Ian Gobey who has continued to support the benefice. Rachel's work in the care homes continues to grow. Worship at Badgeworth Court is very special, continuing during lockdown, by virtue of Rachel's status as an employee. We are looking forward to returning to regular worship in Chargrove Lawn.

We have five adult confirmation candidates prepared, and eagerly awaiting their confirmations which were postponed from Easter Eve 2020.

We welcomed our curate, Revd Rebecca Spear, in June 2020. What an unusual start to ordained ministry! Rebecca stepped into leading worship in church and online. Her presence in the benefice is already much appreciated and we are looking forward to her continued ministry in 2021 when the pandemic allows a more traditional approach to curacy.

We welcomed Catherine Milsom and her family to St Paul's in February. Catherine is a candidate for ordination training, who joined us to gain experience in ministry. She had the idea for Greenway Gifts, our benefice project, that started as a way to feed hungry children during the October half term, along with activity packs with a Christian theme. This grew to include lonely adults at Christmas, with Comfort and Joy gift bags, and groceries, along with Christmas gift bags for the children.



Greenway Gifts has been a great example of collaboration between the churches and the community, parish councils, Morrisons, Feed Cheltenham and more. We have been able to give grocery bags to struggling families and individuals without judgement, but with the generous love of God.

Last year, I repeated my comment from 2019 when I said that finances have been “a continuing source of concern, but by prayer, faith, generosity and sheer hard work, the picture is not as bleak as we had thought at the start of the year”. Amazingly, by your generosity and by faith, the same is still true of a year when we have met in church very infrequently. Many people have kindly started to donate online. Thanks again to those who work so hard to raise funds for the churches.

We continued our two-year programme “Flourish” – helping us to develop and nurture confident disciples. The core team are enjoying the challenge of the programme and we have plans to introduce small groups, a sermon series or two and to focus on our everyday faith, from Sunday to Saturday. We also introduced a bible verse for the benefice:

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" Mark 16:15

As we recall 2020, we should pause to remember those who died, either as a direct result of the pandemic, indirectly, or unrelated to it. In a year when more deaths occurred than usual, and in unusual circumstances, with funerals much affected, we miss and mourn our loved ones deeply and take comfort in the knowledge that they are safe in God’s loving care.

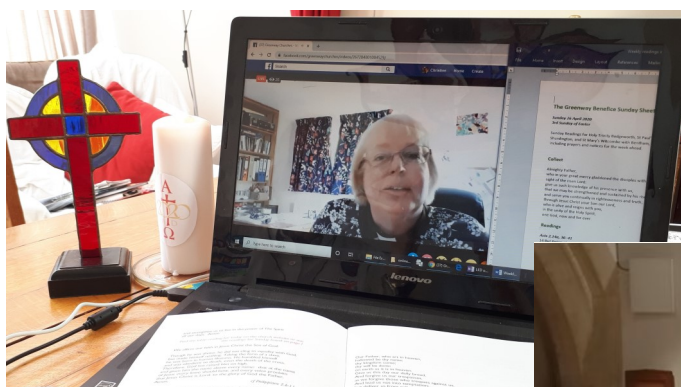
In an annual report, it is only possible to scratch the surface, so please look at the separate reports from each church, and at the other benefice reports contained in this document. Thanks to everyone who holds office or a role in the churches. Thanks to those who have no official role, but who serve faithfully. Apologies to anyone not mentioned here, but please know that you are all much appreciated in your service to our loving God.

Despite the huge challenges of 2020, our churches have worked hard and remained faithful. I continue to give thanks for all that has gone before, and pray for the year ahead, for the easing of lockdown restrictions, for resuming worship in church however that may look, for our flourishing as individual disciples, as churches, as a benefice and as the body of Christ in this place.

Blessings,

Susan

*The Reverend Susan Cooke*



Benefice Christmas Communion - Greenway Churches & Shurdington C of E Primary School

## CURATE'S REPORT

I would like to begin by offering my heartfelt thanks to the people of Greenway Benefice who have extended such a warm and supportive welcome to me during my first months of ordained ministry as a Deacon and Curate. Due to the Covid Pandemic, entering the Benefice in July 2020 was an unexpected start to this new and exciting part of my life journey. In the times when I was able to meet people, either through virtual technology or face to face, I found myself to be greeted with enthusiasm, kindness and support that has made me feel truly welcome in my new role. Greenway Benefice is a wonderful place to be as we seek to further God's Kingdom on earth. And "thank you" to everyone from the local communities who were so supportive in creating beautiful and poppies when I found myself inspired to mastermind our Remembrance Day display in Shurdington,.

In addition to enjoying some of the many wonderful opportunities to preach, lead worship, and engage with the challenges of technology.... (this Granny is not of a generation born into the wonders of ZOOM and Facebook!).... I have also faced personal challenges during the year. In particular, I found myself caring for an elderly, sick and rapidly declining family member for whom I became totally responsible during the Covid lockdowns. Again I would like to thank not only Revd. Susan Cooke and the Benefice but also the Diocese for much helpful support at this time, and also for their recognition of the impact of my unexpected role as Carer and the restrictions this placed on my availability and energy.

I look forward to journeying on with my new Church Family that stretches across all three churches of the Benefice and beyond. We live in challenging times, but also exciting ones as new opportunities open up. We can all hope and pray that we may move beyond the tight restrictions and challenges of the pandemic into times when we can gather more freely in face to face fellowship when we wish to.

I give thanks to God that I find myself in ministry alongside such a loving worshipping community, and pray that we may continue to find new and life-giving ways to pursue our Benefice vision that we may "Go into the world and preach the gospel to all creation". (Mark 16:15)

***The Reverend Rebecca Spear.***



## READER'S REPORT

Given the Covid situation during the year and continuing into 2021 it might be thought that the role of Reader in the benefice might be a little thin on the ground in terms of report content. However, this is simply not the case.

This has been the second full year of my being Funeral Minister for the Benefice. It is always a little sad to reflect on those we have lost since last January:

Ivor Preece, Gerald Brown, John Millington, Ken Billing, Jean Hurley, Di Shannon, Iris Roberts, Pat McConkey, Robert Mansbridge, Pat Bramley, Joan Dyer, Donald Crisp, Mike Puffett, and Doreen Organ just to mention a few of the more widely known.

I regularly say that taking funeral services is a great privilege and to be able to do God's work in supporting relatives and friends at one of the darker times in their lives has its own, special reward. To be thanked and given lovely feedback regarding services in church and crematoriums is a wonderful bonus.

Revd Susan has not been able to take many funerals during the year due to having to self-isolate. Covid rules has also meant that we have not carried any services in church for most of the year. This has been because of the size and layout of our churches not being conducive to keeping social distancing for funeral bearers and ministers, plus the need to separate mourners. This has indirectly meant that our organists such as Matt Richardson, John Stanley and Ian James, Vergers such as Mary Tombs, Rachel Cottell, Mike Cass, Lisa Pearson, Andrew Martin and Sue Padfield and all who indirectly support this ministry by doing theirs have also been very limited in their activities.

The Gloucester Diocese Funeral Project has been relaunched as Gloucester Funerals this year. This is a "One Stop Shop" for Funeral Directors to make contact and arrange funerals in churches across the Diocese where retired or sick clergy and Readers are not available. As a result, I have been asked to minister at funerals for a few parishes and Benefices this year.

Along with funerals I have done a fair number of on-line services during the year. Sunday morning worship has developed beautifully as many are now rising to the challenges of Facebook, Zoom and so on, to provide a team dimension rather than a singleton approach. A vote of thanks is due to Catherine Milsom and Revd Susan for dragging this dinosaur (me that is) into the twenty-first century. If anyone had asked me at the end of 2019 if I were going to be leading mid-week worship on-line, I probably would have laughed! I sincerely hope that all who have tuned in have found it as inspiring and thought provoking as I have. Midday prayers has been a great opportunity for education about, and appreciation of, saints, martyrs and others venerated by the church.

With the exit plan recently announced I sincerely hope and pray that we will be able to return to our church buildings by the end of the year, though nothing can be absolutely certain. What is sure is that it will be a wonderfully emotional time for us all.

***Robert Poole***



## BENEFICE ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

My work as administrator has changed a great deal because of the pandemic, especially the focus on wedding and baptism administration. At the start of 2020, church life continued as usual, with two Christenings, and the annual Christening celebration for families whose children have recently been Christened in the Benefice. Several weddings were booked, and I was checking all was well with organists, bell ringers etc. Plans were being made for Lent and Easter, and I had Easter cards ready to print for the three Parishes.

Once we went into lockdown in March, I began to work from home where possible, whilst wondering if there would be much need for an administrator with no church services taking place. I needn't have worried – Revd Susan swiftly started to hold services on-line, and I found a whole new realm of administrative tasks heading my way!

With the use of new technology came new regulations to be found out about, and the relevant licences obtained so that we could hold online services without infringing copyright rules – not a problem when singing in church from a hymn book, but very different when streaming live on Facebook or YouTube.

Our pages on Achurchnearyou have been used to promote our online services and other events to a wider congregation as well as a reference point for our existing members.

Service sheets were still needed, invitations to special services were still sent, and all the other regular tasks have continued, but with much less paper and far more online publishing.

Two small weddings took place in the autumn, and most of our 2020 wedding couples have deferred their weddings, so we are likely to be busier than usual in the summer of 2021 and 2022.

**Chris Langham**



## THE GREENWAY BENEFICE PASTORAL CARE GROUP 2020

During 2020 Robert Poole, Reader and Funeral Minister and the Rev'd Rebecca Spear joined the group. A meeting was held early in the year and since March it has been an agenda item at the regular Local Ministry Meeting.

Unfortunately no in person contact was able to take place but regular communication, by letter, e-mail and telephone have been made with constant watch and updates, especially of those more vulnerable due to isolation imposed by Covid 19 restrictions. All have appreciated the contact given by the churches and more recently at Christmas that by Greenway Gifts.

The All Souls' Service took place on line for the families bereaved during 2019-2020 and support has been given when required. The group was able to continue a high standard of pastoral care within each parish while adhering to Covid regulations.

We look forward to meeting together once again in the coming year.

**Clare Stewart.**

## LOCAL MINISTRY TEAM REPORT 2020

Team: The Revd Susan Cooke, the Revd Rebecca Spear, Robert Poole, Paul Stanfield, Clare Stewart, Catherine Milsom, Christine Jeffs, Sue Padfield.

The team were very pleased to welcome Catherine, discerning her vocation to ordination, in February, and the Revd Rebecca as curate in July.

The Local Ministry Team has continued throughout the year to work together to plan and lead ministry and mission in the Benefice, amending the mode of everything – services, meetings, pastoral care – as the implications and restrictions of Coronavirus have come and varied. Most of the team have also continued with their involvement in the “Flourish” Discipleship course, elements from which have been, and continue to be, included in our worship and outreach planning. These have included the Frontline Sundays, the institution of Small Groups and regularly thinking about our frontlines through intercessions and interviews in our services.

2020 began as usual with the usual service pattern, a joyful Baptism reunion service and tea at Candlemas, and a Benefice Away Day at Prinknash in February. Lent groups and Lent lunches were planned and started, then curtailed at Mothering Sunday by the first lockdown. With the rest of the world we moved on-line; thanks to Susan's and Catherine's IT ability, services were held virtually, and their availability immediately increased - a support to those in isolation– with weekday lunchtime worship as well as a Sunday service and Thursday Morning Prayer. The team were much aware of the needs of those unable to access on-line worship and in need of other support. Phone calls were made, support groups were set up in all the villages and resources of all kinds delivered. Once possible, the churches were opened at set times for private prayer, with the necessary cleaning, risk assessments and distancing regulations followed. In July we were able to think about gathered services again, but it was felt necessary to continue with on-line provision, so the pattern through August and into the autumn became two services per month – one eucharistic, one not - in each church. Several of these were successfully held in the churchyards, where it was also possible to hold Acts of Remembrance. The November lockdown interfered again, so on Advent Sunday a moving “Make your own Christingle” service was held on-line, as was Compline on Friday evenings in Advent, but each church rejoiced to be able to hold a gathered Carols service and to be in church for Communion on Christmas Day. A Benefice video of Communion for Christmas was also made and shown.

The issue of the provision of meals for school-children during holiday times, which arose in the autumn resulted in the setting up of Greenway Gifts, masterminded by Catherine – and helped to no small extent by her Mum. Many needy families were supplied with groceries bags and activity packs for the children at the Autumn half-term and again in the Christmas holidays, when “Comfort and Joy” gifts were also delivered to, and much appreciated by, members of our villages and congregations known to be isolated or housebound.

Through their involvement in the planning, all members of the team have been much aware of the amount of work on-line and parallel arrangements have entailed for Susan, the contribution that Rebecca has made in the Benefice, despite the unusualness of this beginning to her curacy, the considerable devoted and mostly unseen ministry Robert has carried out in his role as Funerals Minister through this difficult year and the notable contribution Catherine has made through Greenway Gifts and with her IT skills. They are owed much gratitude for what the Benefice has been able to accomplish during this year.

## CHILDREN'S WORK IN THE GREENWAY BENEFICE, *by Revd Susan*

During 2020, our work with children and families continued; through our work with our school, Shurdington Preschool and Meadows Day Nursery. We recorded videos for them, for the key festivals, and every week for school. We also shared those resources on our YouTube page and our Greenway Churches Facebook page, so that other children and families could join in. Our Family Workshop team also made craft and worship videos.



Julian and vicar Ted ready for Palm Sunday



George painted a picture for Revd Rebecca

We were able to offer outdoor opportunities as well, including treasure hunts, nativity trails, a rock snake, a Christmas Door trail and much more. We sent out resources via email for families. We had our usual Easter and Christmas competitions, for the cover of the Three in One and our Benefice Easter and Christmas cards. We held a very popular online Christingle Service, providing everything but the orange for the participants.

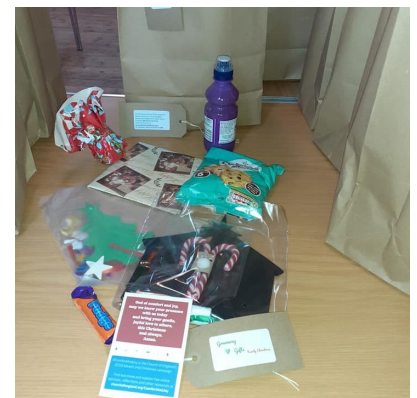
Starting in October, we gave out activity packs in the school holidays, to offer entertainment, groceries, and Christian witness.



Here are photos showing the typical contents of an October and Christmas activity pack for children, as part of the Greenway Gifts project.

We met lots of children as they collected their packs & groceries!

We are looking forward to meeting them more often in 2021.



## OPEN THE BOOK

There are seven members of the Open the Book Team – five men and two ladies – who have been running Open the Book together in recent years.

Our routine works very well and the camaraderie is excellent with assigned roles of ‘Open & Close’, Narrator, and casting of the characters in the Bible story. We always seek to involve the children, both individually and as a school, in the story.

Last year, you will recall, we reported to you the positive feedback received from dozens of the pupils, which included:

*“I like Open the Book. We get to join in.”*

*“Their plays are really good and the way they explain the stories is good”*

*“I like how you bring Bible stories to life”*

*“They help us learn the stories of Jesus”*

So, you can imagine, both the Team Members and the school children have felt quite deprived not being able to perform Open the Book for the whole of the past twelve months. We know that teachers have been using, in individual classes, the Lion Storyteller Bible and some videos, which has kept Bible story-telling alive at the school.

In the past week every member of the Team has received a card, designed and written by pupils, saying that they hope we are well, that they miss us and look forward to seeing us again. We much appreciated that and have replied saying how much we look forward to returning.

## ALL STARS

All Stars – a Christian after-school club for Reception and KS1 children in Shurdington Primary School – is normally run there on behalf of the Benefice churches, but, owing to Covid, this has not been possible since the first lockdown. It is hoped to be able to return to it when restrictions allow. It is usually popular and offers those younger children (and their parents), who wish it, more on the Christian faith. Sessions usually involve a story, often acted out, songs, prayer and a craft activity. Many of the children are very knowledgeable and insightful and will volunteer their own prayers willingly and thoughtfully. During lockdown Catherine and I have put together occasional videos as a contribution to the rota of those, provided by the Vicar and others, which class teachers use in place of Collective Worship.



***Sue Padfield***

## **MOTHERS' UNION 2020**

In this very strange year, we managed to have three meetings.

In January Ian led us in a Eucharist service, February was AGM and we managed a March meeting a week before lockdown. Revd. Rosemary Franklin our DP from 18 years ago led us in a very lovely Lent Meditation. Such a lovely way to end our meetings and with an old friend.

We haven't been able to have any fund raisers this year, all Deanery events such as Quiet Day and Lady Day went by the board. We were to have hosted Quiet Day with Revd. Susan leading it.

Six of us met to make a video for Katie's 80th birthday...it was fun and we all had long hair!

Sadly, the big day for AFIA had to be postponed and the General meeting in Belfast. Maggie and I managed to meet three families before lockdown and they had holidays in August.

I decided to send an email each week to members and friends.....when I started I thought six or seven weeks...number 42 has just gone out.

I do enjoy doing it and I feel it is keeping us together as a group. I manage to find something to talk about each week, MU news and prayers. We look forward to meeting...maybe May/June 21 and we have decided to have a service, a scrumptious tea and TALK!!!!

***Kate Thompson***

## **SAFEGUARDING**

In the Greenway benefice, we aim to create an environment which is welcoming and respectful and which enables safeguarding concerns to be raised and responded to openly, promptly and consistently. In order to assist with the creation of a safeguarding culture in the Greenway benefice, we comply with all the requirements of the diocesan safeguarding team.

We have a designated and experienced Safeguarding Officer, Rachel Cottell, who works with Revd. Susan and the three PCCs.

We are looking towards everyone on our PCCs and our Safeguarding officer having training this coming year, along with a review and update of DBS certificates.

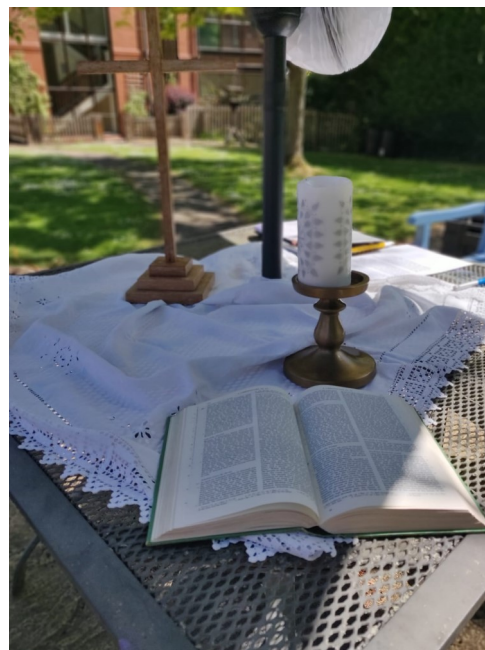
Each church displays the 'Promoting a Safer Church' safeguarding policy statement, which includes names and contact details of those who can help children and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding is a standing item on all PCC agendas and Rachel regularly reports to the PCCs on safeguarding.

***Rachel Cottell***

## Ministry to Care Homes

Since August 2017, we have been holding a fortnightly church service in our two local care homes –Badgeworth Court and Chargrove Lawn. The services follow a printed service devised by us in the benefice, with support from the diocesan dementia friendly churches team. The Praise service usually includes hymns, a familiar chorus, prayers, and a reading and reflection. Many services are multi-sensory to take into account the needs of residents, and all services are dementia friendly.



This year has been very different and we have had to adapt what we can offer.

In February 2020, we held our last service at Chargrove Lawn before lockdown started.

At Badgeworth Court, we have been more fortunate with my being on the staff there. Services have continued, with smaller groups and sadly, no singing. We held our Easter Day service outdoors in glorious sunshine!

We have also featured twice this year in the Diocesan weekly newsletter.



At Badgeworth Court, there has been a growing awareness of the need for spiritual support and we have provided end of life prayers for residents, met with families and held memorial services to remember residents who have died. Staff are also coming to services or asking for prayer.

### **Rachel Cottell**

*Lay Worship Leader (Greenway benefice) and Community Dementia Link (Dementia Training & Education Strategy for Gloucestershire)*



## **BENEFICE BIBLE STUDY**

The Benefice Bible Study group has continued to meet on Monday afternoons throughout much of the year. Before Lockdown hospitality continued to be generously given by Averil Cole. Once we all got used to zoom, those of the group who were able to continued to meet on-line. For most of the time we followed a Bible Society course with sections entitled Still Lyfe (sic), Spirit Lyfe, Word Lyfe, and Real Lyfe. (These can be found on line).

Our meetings always include time for prayer, which includes local as well as global needs. During Lent the group usually becomes a Lent study group.

We are very grateful to our hostesses and to all who contribute. The group is always delighted to welcome new members, so, if you are interested, why not give it a try!

*Sue Padfield*

## **THREE IN ONE**

The pandemic affected the magazine (along with much else!) and several adaptations were made. Of note are that physical distribution of printed copies was suspended for three months and that the magazine was placed online for the first time.

The other major decision was that Witcombe with Bentham would end their practice of delivering the magazine to every property in the two villages. Instead, it would be delivered to those residents requesting a physical copy. This has led to a sizeable reduction in the print run, typically from 670 to 370 copies per month. (The actual number is revised as required.) Further, the electronic version is now made available via Witcombe Village Hall's email distribution list.

The magazine continues to welcome contributions from residents. Articles about people's lives are well received, giving all readers fresh insights into the varied and rich life experiences of those living nearby.

We remain committed to Three-In-One being a printed magazine distributed to residents across the benefice. The magazine will continue to be made available online, which is additional to the print edition. The magazine can be found online via any of our three churches' pages on [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)

*Ian Davies Business Manager, 3 in 1*



## **DEANERY of SEVERN VALE SYNOD REPORT for 2020**

The Deanery comprises 12 Benefices made up between them of 45 parishes with 46 churches. Geographically the Deanery forms a large area from Mitcheldean in the Forest of Dean in the west to Preston in the north-west of the county, contains parishes on both sides of the Severn north of Gloucester, then incorporates a swathe of villages round the eastern side of Gloucester, with St Mary's at Great Witcombe its most south-easterly church.

### **Parish representatives:**

Holy Trinity, Badgeworth: Rachel Cottell, Hazel Cotton  
St Paul's Shurdington: Chris Langham  
St Mary's, Witcombe w Bentham: Sarah Hargreave (part year) Sue Padfield.

### **Standing and Pastoral Committee:**

Area Dean: The Revd Simon Mason  
Assistant area Deans: The Revds John Longuet-Higgins, Jacqui Hyde  
Lay Chairman: Mrs Sue Padfield  
Secretary: Mr Steve Riddick  
Treasurer: Mr Derek Wright  
Parish Share Officer: Canon Roger Parker  
Clergy member: vacant  
Lay member: Mrs Monica Richardson

Owing to floods in February as well as the Covid 19 pandemic, this has been an extraordinary year; the February meeting was postponed to March and then cancelled for lockdown I. Where meetings have been able to continue they have been virtual.

Between Synods the Standing and Pastoral committee have met to plan and to hear reports on the benefices' progress and well-being and on finance. This year they have embarked on leading the process of Deanery Mapping prior to the formation of a Deanery Strategic Plan; like other things the timescale for this has had to be extended.

Deanery Synod usually meets three times a year - meetings include reports from benefices, from the Parish Share Officer and from Diocesan and General Synods, updates on Diocesan initiatives, strategy and finance, and speakers on a wide variety of issues relevant to the Church of England. There are opportunities to share good practice and advice and to learn from each other's strengths. Deanery Synod can propose motions for debate at Diocesan Synod, whose members are elected by Deanery Synod, and its members should convey information and opinion between Diocese and parish and vice versa. Deanery Synod also elects the Diocesan representatives for General Synod.

### **During 2020 Synod met, via Zoom, twice:**

#### ***Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> August:***

The Area Dean spoke on the Deanery Strategic Planning Process, giving a brief overview of the current situation in the Church:

(i) Church finances across the country were stretched even before lockdown and have now of course deteriorated further

(ii) Some Dioceses have already announced significant cut-backs, while similar are expected elsewhere



iii) Gloucester is not so badly affected, but we do need to make savings

(iv) In addition there have been concerns for some time that we are not properly mission-focused, so we need to consider whether there are better ways in which to organise ourselves in order to reach out beyond the current church community – especially with social media and all the recent advances in digital church.

Given the above, Deaneries have been asked to develop strategic plans for their future, involving restructures where appropriate; incumbents would be kicking this off in the near future, with PCCs and congregations being involved in due course.

The issue of Leadership in Rural Multi-Parish Benefices was raised again; failing any progress as a Diocesan project, the Deanery leadership has decided to proceed locally on matters such as family/children work and digital church; hopefully we can then show successes to the Diocese for other deaneries to follow.

It was reported that the Newent Community School Chaplaincy Project has been delayed by school closures but a Steering Committee has been assembled and the school remains committed.

Local LIFE Vision Initiatives have also been impaired by Covid-19; nevertheless work has certainly not stopped. Helen Sammon advised that Owen Westall, the Children and Family Worker for Highnam and Leadon Vale, has been a huge asset, working tirelessly on social media and with ideas for the re-opening of primary schools start to re-open and there were many other reports of on-line innovation and its take-up.

### ***Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November:***

The Revds Simon Witcombe (Chaplain) and Paul Youde (Foundation Fellow) then made a presentation on Christian Presence and Support at the University of Gloucestershire, which offers chaplaincy services across each of its sites, with support for people of all faiths and none. The chaplains are supported in a variety of ways by a group of volunteer Foundation Fellows – via prayer meetings, assistance at events and services, helping Christian Unions, financial support, training; and by listening and providing encouragement.

The Area Dean updated Synod on the information-gathering and SWOT analyses being conducted towards the Deanery Strategic Plan. Synod were informed of the imminent retirement of the Revds Steve Taylor, Helen Sammon and Suzanne Skepper.

In LIFE Vision Updates, the “Long Table/Feeding the 5000” project now extending to to a “Comfort and Joy” initiative was a great success, Greenway Benefice were working to help feed needy children over half-term, Rudford Retreats had greatly extended its online offerings, St John’s Churchdown had used its railings for All Souls’ remembrance, Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust had been helped by a remotely-made CD of choir music and St George’s Brockworth had continued to increase its digital skills and local outreach.

The Parish Share Officer noted that many parishes were struggling to meet their 2020 commitments and that allocated 2021 Parish Share would be the same as for 2020.

Synod minutes and other information and reports can be found on the Deanery website, [www.severnvaldeanery.co.uk](http://www.severnvaldeanery.co.uk), thanks for the upkeep of which are due to Hugh James from Mitcheldean.

***Sue Padfield***